between communities without any benefits to the fire fighters or the communities, such as enhanced fire prevention activities, improved administration, training or response to emergencies.

As a result of these recent trends, and the conclusions of the 1991 Harvard report, the PFFM has taken the position that it does not oppose the concept of regionalization provided that the following goals are met:[2]

- The introduction of a regionalization plan must not decrease the pay scale of individual fire fighters;
- Working conditions must improve;
- No reduction in manpower can occur;
- The integrity of seniority should not be compromised;
- The excision of stations and equipment where service duplication is not a problem should be prevented; and
- All parties involved in improving the fire service should share the equivalent burden and gain the equivalent amount of benefits.

Opportunities for MetroWest Fire Departments

As a whole, MetroWest staffing levels and budgets seem to be adequate to handle the demands for fire service in the area. Response times are satisfactory and budgets have remained stable for the past five years. Individually however, each community differs in the type of service it provides to its residents and businesses. Variations in per capita spending, and the disproportionate use of mutual aid among the communities suggests that MetroWest as a region in not consistent in providing fire service.

The overriding benefit of improved cooperation through interlocal agreements or consolidation is the opportunity to improve fire services to the residents and businesses of participating communities. Data indicates that Massachusetts communities with populations above 100,000 people have equal or lower per capita fire service costs than MetroWest communities, while providing enhanced fire prevention services that are too costly for smaller communities to implement.

Levels of Service

Staffing

It is possible that a consolidated district could better maximize every resource currently available to each department. A consolidated district could more quickly and effectively utilize the entire region's manpower and resources in responding to fire and medical emergencies.

A consolidated district may also be an improvement to the current mutual aid systems that all MetroWest communities use. Right now, a fire department cannot request mutual aid support until it reaches a scene, wasting valuable response time. A district approach would dispatch the maximum force needed, on the first alarm.

The Professional Fire Fighter of Massachusetts would consider supporting a regional fire district provided no employee loses a job under the reorganization. Absent layoffs, a consolidated fire district could shift and redistribute responsibilities to ensure more fire fighters are available for crisis and emergency situations.

[2] Professional Fire Fighters of Massachusetts. "A Changing Profession?", 1996.